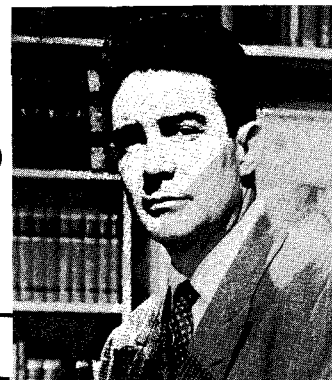


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THE STORY OF LAOS

The story of Laos reveals the major fallacies of American foreign policy since World War II — a policy which has consistently used the resources of the United States to build up communist power and prestige all over the world, while weakening us militarily and economically and making us an object of contempt in the eyes of friend and foe alike.

Background

In July, 1953 — after approximately 53,000 Americans had lost their lives⁽¹⁾ — President Eisenhower accepted a Korean armistice on terms which were proposed by “neutralist” India, but which had been virtually dictated by the communists.

Trying to restore shattered American prestige, the Eisenhower Administration claimed that we had stopped the communists in Korea, asserting that communists now realized they could conquer no more territory in Asia. The Administration was especially firm in its pronouncements about guaranteeing the integrity of French Indochina.

Indochina is a huge peninsula, projecting southward from the Asian mainland, into the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. It comprises Burma, Malaya, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Those parts of the region which were French colonial possessions were known as French Indochina. French Indochina included Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

Sporadic and indecisive guerrilla warfare had been going on between the French and communist groups for years; and we had supported the French with millions of dollars of aid. Conditions changed explosively after the Korean armistice was concluded. The Korean war had given an incalculable boost to the morale, the prestige, and the military strength of communists in Asia.

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Challenging the Eisenhower Administration to keep its pledge about guaranteeing the integrity of French Indochina, communists converted scattered guerrilla action into total war against the French. We kept sending aid to the French; but on May 7, 1954, the gallant resistance of a small band of French Foreign Legionnaires was broken; and Dienbienphu, the last French stronghold in northern Vietnam, fell under the pounding of Chinese communist artillery.

The aid we had given France was wasted, and the communists had done what we had loudly pledged ourselves never to let them do.

Shortly after the fall of Dienbienphu in May, 1954, the Soviet Union and Great Britain suggested an international conference to end the war and settle disputes in Indochina.

At the Geneva Conference in the late summer of 1954 (which the United States "supported" but did not attend), the old French Union was divided into four "nations": neutral Cambodia, neutral Laos, neutral South Vietnam, and communist North Vietnam.

An International Control Commission — composed of representatives from Canada, India, and communist Poland — was created and given the job of supervising the truce agreements. Communists had guerrilla bands throughout the area. Having been given all of North Vietnam, they were supposed to disperse their rebel groups in Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam and then to respect the "neutrality" of those three independent nations.

They never did disperse their guerrilla bands or stop their warfare against the three nations; and the International Control Commission ignored, or tacitly approved, communist violations.

Unwilling to act alone to keep its pledge to protect Laos, the Eisenhower Administration took the lead in setting up SEATO — Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. SEATO was created at Manila in September, 1954, by a treaty of eight nations: the United States,

Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand.

In the "treaty area" (which these 8 "SEATO nations" pledged themselves to protect against communist aggression), were the three "neutral" nations carved from the old French Union — Cambodia, South Vietnam, and Laos.

What Is Laos?

Laos is a landlocked, primitive, jungle kingdom of about two million people, practically all of whom are illiterate. It is not a nation, or even a national community; and the people have no national spirit. Laos is a collection of warring families, existing as a "nation" only because of United States aid and support.⁽²⁾

The entire Laotian economy went on the American dole, in 1955. We trained, equipped, clothed, housed, fed, and paid the salaries of the Laotian army and of all Laotian police forces; and we directly financed more than 80% of the total civilian budget of the government of Laos.

By 1958, the evidence that our aid to Laos was doing harm instead of good was so conspicuous that the Committee on Government Operations of the U. S. House of Representatives decided to investigate.

The Committee found criminal corruption on the part of American foreign aid officials in Laos. It found inefficiency, waste, extravagance, stupidity, and dishonesty on the part of American foreign aid officialdom generally; and it found that United States aid, extravagantly poured into Laos, had hurt that country economically, politically, and militarily, and had made the United States an object of contempt and hatred.⁽³⁾

In July, 1959, communists from North Vietnam sent reinforcements to communist rebels in Laos, and opened an all-out attack on the royal government forces. The government of Laos eventually appealed to the United Nations for help. The UN sent a Security Council team to Laos to look around. The

UN team determined that there was no outside intervention.

On August 9, 1960, Captain Kong Le seized military power in Vientiane, the capital of Laos. Kong Le was an officer in the King's Army which the United States had built. He had been trained, by Americans, in the Philippines.⁽⁴⁾

When Kong Le defected and seized power on August 9, 1960, he gained effective control, although the King's government remained technically in power for several months.

On December 1, 1960, the United States temporarily suspended aid to the anti-communists, while the Soviets increased their airlift of supplies to the communists. The royal government collapsed. The premier and his cabinet fled the country, but parliament remained loyal and stayed in Vientiane with the King. The King appointed Prince Boun Oum (anti-communist) as provisional premier of a new government;⁽⁵⁾ and the bloody battle for control of the capital of Laos began.

On December 15, 1960, a State Department spokesman in Washington said the United States would do everything in its power to help the new government of Prince Boun Oum overcome the threat of external aggression.⁽⁶⁾

Ultimately, the new government of Boun Oum prevailed to the extent that Captain Kong Le's communist forces were driven from the capital.

On December 19, 1960, the State Department announced the resumption of full military and economic aid to Laos, saying that the triumph of the new non-communist government over Soviet-supported forces provided grounds for considerable satisfaction.⁽⁷⁾

An American About-Face

On December 23, 1960, the Soviets proposed that the old International Control Commission for Indochina be revived; and that another Geneva Conference be called to settle the trouble in Laos.⁽⁸⁾

Premier Boun Oum (supported fully by the United States) rejected the proposal.

On March 23, 1961, the British Government formally made a proposal that was virtually identical with the one the Soviets had made on December 23, 1960 — that is, for a cease-fire; a revival of the Indian-Canadian-Polish International Control Commission; and an international conference.⁽⁹⁾

At a press conference on March 23, President Kennedy said:

"We strongly support the present British proposal. . . ."

A story buried on page 12 of the *Washington Post*, March 24, 1961, said:

"In essence, the United States has accepted both the kind of international commission and the kind of conference which the Soviet Union wanted."

Thus, while vowing that it would never do any such thing, the United States Government in three months did an about-face: from, supporting the pro-Western government of Laos in its rejection of the Soviet proposal made December 23, 1960; to, strongly supporting the Soviet proposal (now called the "British proposal") on March 23, 1961.

We Enforce Peace on Communist Terms

On March 26, 1961, President Kennedy told members of Congress that the United States, Britain, and France were in complete agreement not to let Laos fall into communist control.⁽¹⁰⁾

On March 28, 1961, SEATO powers, meeting at Bangkok, agreed on a compromise resolution which said that members of SEATO would take "appropriate" action *if* the British proposal for a cease-fire and for negotiations failed, and if communist military attempts to control Laos continued.

Americans had suggested a "tougher" resolution, but the French feared to antagonize the Soviets.⁽¹¹⁾

Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, and Pakistan were dismayed at United States vacillation; but New Zealand and Great Britain agreed with France on conciliation and compromise.⁽¹²⁾

On March 31, 1961, arriving in Washington from the SEATO meeting, Secretary of State Dean Rusk said he was "much encouraged" by the "free world unity" displayed at the conference! Mr. Rusk also indicated that the United States would accept an "unofficial cease-fire" in Laos, as evidence of good faith by the Kremlin. We had previously demanded a formal truce agreement as a necessary condition to our consent to an international conference on Laos.⁽¹³⁾

On April 16, 1961, Rusk said the Soviets wanted to start negotiations on Laos before fighting stopped, but that the United States rejected such timing as a communist device for stalling.⁽¹⁴⁾

On April 21, 1961, the Soviet Union and Great Britain completed their agreement to call a cease-fire in Laos. The agreement did not specify that the Laos truce must be verified before an international conference would be called.⁽¹⁵⁾

On April 29, 1961, President Kennedy and his top advisers met in a crisis session to decide whether to ask for military intervention in Laos, because the communists had refused to stop fighting. The President said the time for appeals and warnings to the communists had run out — that the time for action to back up the warnings had come; but that America must not act alone.⁽¹⁶⁾

On May 16, 1961, the International Conference on Laos (arranged by the Soviets and the British) began at Geneva. It was boycotted by the pro-Western government of Laos — because communist rebel factions were given a seat at the conference on an equal basis with the legal government.⁽¹⁷⁾

The United States government had repeatedly asserted it would not go to the Geneva conference while fighting was still going on

in Laos; but it went, and stayed there for months, while the communists kept fighting and gaining ground.

The principal communist demand at the Geneva conference was for a coalition government in Laos. The anti-communist Boun Oum government of Laos would not discuss the demand, because Boun Oum knew (as everyone else knows) that a coalition government with communists means a communist-controlled government.

On May 27, 1961, an Associated Press dispatch from Geneva said:

"The United States today accused the communist-led Pathet Lao rebels of repeatedly and wilfully violating the cease-fire in Laos, and demanded a halt...."

"The U. S. delegation is not prepared to sit in Geneva indefinitely while Pathet Lao artillery and rebel infantry units whittle away at territory held by the pro-Western Royal Laotian government."⁽¹⁸⁾

But there our delegates sat, at a conference which we had vowed never to attend unless fighting had first stopped; and as we sat and negotiated, the communists continued their conquests in Laos.

By the end of 1961, the Kennedy Administration had decided to force the anti-communist government of Laos to accept "peace" on communist terms.

On January 2, 1962, Winthrop G. Brown, United States Ambassador to Laos, "virtually had to force an audience" with representatives of the anti-communist Boun Oum government in Vientiane "to present Washington's point of view." Washington's viewpoint was that Boun Oum must accept the communist demand for a coalition government.⁽¹⁹⁾

To enforce its viewpoint, Washington threatened to stop all aid to Boun Oum. Despite his total dependence on American aid, Boun Oum refused to surrender to the American-backed communist demand.⁽¹⁹⁾

We stopped our aid to Laos on January 3, 1962;⁽²⁰⁾ but restored it on January 12, 1962, after Prince Boun Oum had finally promised

to go to Geneva for a conference with communists.⁽²¹⁾

In February, 1962, we again stopped aid to Laos because Boun Oum had not yet accepted a coalition government on communist terms.⁽²²⁾

On March 25, 1962, W. Averell Harriman (then Assistant Secretary of State for Far East Affairs) warned "right-wing" Laotian leaders in Vientiane that they would lose all American aid if they did not accept the communist demand for a coalition government. This threat brought the anti-communists into discussions with communists and "neutralists."⁽²³⁾

On May 2, 1962, W. Averell Harriman, in a discussion of Laos, before a small American audience, said, among other things:

"It doesn't matter much to us, one way or the other, what happens in Laos."⁽²⁴⁾

On May 5, 1962, American military authorities in Laos confirmed rumors that communist Chinese had invaded northern Laos.⁽²⁵⁾

On May 6, 1962, pro-communist forces in Laos, supported by communist troops from China, launched a major attack on Nam Tha, capital city of a northwestern province of Laos.

Washington officialdom criticized the anti-communist forces for "provoking" the attack. Washington regarded the attack and conquest of new territory for communists as "no major catastrophe," saying that it "could not be interpreted as a sign of bad faith by the pro-Communists; and that it should not jeopardize negotiations" to create a coalition government.⁽²⁶⁾

On May 11, 1962, Max Frankel, in a special report to *The New York Times* from Washington, said pro-communists had routed the anti-communist army in northwestern Laos; that the Kennedy Administration had written off the anti-communist army as useless; and that Kennedy would threaten to "disavow" all "right-wing" political leaders unless they

accepted a coalition government. Frankel said Kennedy would make a "show of strength" by sending American troops into the area near Laos.⁽²⁷⁾

On May 16, 1962, Kennedy's "show of strength" started when 5,000 American troops landed in Thailand. In Washington, Secretary of State Dean Rusk and the Soviet Ambassador had a conference and agreed to call for a "cease-fire" in Laos.⁽²⁸⁾

On May 18, 1962, W. Averell Harriman spoke to the Laotian Ambassador in Washington, sharply rebuking "right-wing" political leaders in Laos for resisting the coalition government. Harriman, in effect, blamed the anti-communists for the communist invasion and conquest of the northwestern province of Laos.⁽²⁹⁾

On June 11, 1962, the three rival princes in Laos met and agreed on a coalition government. The three: Souvanna Phouma, pro-communist "neutralist"; Prince Souphanouvong, communist; and Prince Boun Oum, anti-communist. It was agreed that pro-communist Phouma would be premier; that communist Souphanouvong would be deputy premier; and that Boun Oum, the anti-communist, would retire.⁽³⁰⁾

The person who eventually replaced Boun Oum as "rightist" deputy premier in the coalition government was Phoumi Nosavana — a man with no known record of fighting communism.

On June 13, 1962, President Kennedy echoed Khrushchev in welcoming Laos' new coalition government.⁽³¹⁾

The coalition government was formally installed on June 23, 1962. The next day, Premier Phouma left the country for a visit in Europe, leaving the reins of government in the hands of his communist half-brother, Souphanouvong. The first official act of the coalition government, under Souphanouvong, on June 24, 1962, was a bitter denunciation of the United States for having troops in Thailand.⁽³²⁾

On July 23, 1962, the 14 nations meeting at Geneva signed documents guaranteeing the neutrality and territorial integrity of Laos.⁽³³⁾

The Geneva agreement gave the three-nation control commission (Canada, India, communist Poland) the task of supervising the functioning of the coalition government in Laos. The United States agreed to pay 17.6% of the annual cost of the control commission.⁽³⁴⁾

The Geneva agreement was never submitted to the U. S. Senate for advice and consent as a treaty. Questioned about this, W. Averell Harriman, in August, 1962, said:

"The Geneva agreements were concluded by the United States as an executive agreement. The President has adequate authority under the Constitution, by virtue of his power to conduct the foreign relations of the United States and as Commander-in-Chief, to enter into an executive agreement of this kind."⁽³⁵⁾

By October 1, 1962, the United States had moved its "show of strength" troops out of Thailand and was rapidly removing military advisers from Laos; but only 15 of communist North Vietnam's 10,000 troops had left Laos.⁽³⁶⁾

The Geneva agreement required the removal of all foreign troops by October 7, 1962. The United States complied with this requirement; the communists never even made a gesture toward compliance. Nonetheless, the three-nation control commission formally reported "no-evidence" of foreign communist troops in Laos.⁽³⁷⁾

On January 21, 1963, U. S. aid to Laos — suspended for nearly a year — was resumed.⁽³⁸⁾

And Now

Having eliminated anti-communist military forces and political leaders, and having effected the withdrawal of all United States forces, communists in Laos turned their attacks on the "neutralists" with whom they were in "coalition."

By mid-April, 1963, the American press was headlining stories about how the neutralists were retreating before the communist forces; about President Kennedy's "deep concern," and about his "firm intent" not to let the communists take over Laos.

On April 22, 1963, United Press International reported from Washington that President Kennedy was about to make another "show of strength" in Southeast Asia — that the U. S. 7th Fleet was steaming into waters near Laos and that the President was contemplating sending troops back into Thailand.

And W. Averell Harriman was again dashing around the world, holding hugger-mugger conferences to arrange something or other for Laos.⁽³⁹⁾

There, in bare outline, is the story of Laos. Placed against this backdrop, Kennedy's current show of concern is obviously hypocritical; but why is he doing it? Is he merely trying to draw attention away from Cuba? It is impossible to know.

What Should We Do?

It was a mistake in 1954 when Eisenhower (hoping to restore prestige lost by communist conquests elsewhere in Asia) pledged never to permit communist conquest in Laos. We could not prevent communist harassment of Laos without involving ourselves in a land war in the jungles of that primitive land.

If we made the mistake of getting into such a war, we could bleed ourselves white in a conflict which would actually help the Soviets.

A war between communist-controlled Asians and the United States in Laos would provide, as Korea did, valuable training for communist troops. The communists would be killing Americans, but we would not be killing Soviet soldiers. We would be killing Asians, thus intensifying Asian hatred for us and supporting the communist fiction that the Soviet Union is the friend of Asia; America, the enemy.

If we did not permit ourselves to be goaded into such a war, we would lose face throughout the world.

So, by our actions and our proclamations with regard to Laos, we set up a situation in which the Soviets were bound to win and we were bound to lose. If we went to war to keep our pledge, the consequences for us would be disastrous even if we achieved military victory. If we did not go to war, we would be disgraced. In either event, the Soviets would profit mightily.

As it turns out, we have actually helped the communists conquer Laos, pretending all the time that we would never permit communist conquest.

What Should We Do Now?

We should get out of all the far corners of the earth where we now stand as self-appointed — and, generally, unwelcome — guardians, and uplifters, and moralizers, and subsidizers of people who would rather be left alone.

The government of the United States has no constitutional right to use the resources of the American people to support foreign nations. Moreover, it is impossible for the United States (containing 6 per cent of the world's population) to support and defend the remaining 94 per cent of the people on earth.

We spent millions of dollars to help Chinese nationalists resist communism; but in the end, it was the operation of our policies — the giving and withholding of aid at critical junctures to enforce political and military decisions on the nationalists — that helped the communists capture China. And when they captured China, they captured American military and civilian goods which they used in other parts of Asia.

We spent 53,000 American lives to resist communist conquest in Korea; but the Korean

war made the communists a menacing force in Asia.

We gave the French millions of dollars to resist communism in Indochina; but, in the end, communists destroyed French power, took over a key portion of Indochina, and captured a new supply of American military equipment for continued warfare against the remainder of Southeast Asia.

Could Laos and other such nations defend themselves against communism if we got out and withdrew all aid? It seems obvious that they could do at least as well without our help as they have done with it, since our efforts monotonously result, at last, in helping communists. It also seems obvious that military and industrial equipment which we give to small nations increase their attractiveness as prizes for communist conquest. Communists might not extend themselves to take primitive countries like Laos, if it were not for the lure of American goods to be captured.

If we stopped all foreign aid and reversed the foreign policy of the United States — letting the world see that, henceforward, the incalculable strength of the United States will be used to defend the American homeland — we would gain such strength and prestige that we would no longer need to fear war or national bankruptcy.

Congress could and should stop all foreign aid and foreign meddling, and spend American tax money for defense of the American nation. A majority of Senators and Representatives would take such a stand if what they heard from their constituents convinced them that they could never be re-elected unless they did.

The Detailed Story

In 1962, we devoted two issues of this *Report* to Laos ("Laos — Part I," and "Laos — Part II," April 9 and 16, 1962).

Most of the background material in this present *Report* is taken from the two 1962 *Reports*; but those who want a detailed, step-

by-step account of the Laotian story should read the two *Reports* of last year, in connection with this present one.

Reprints of "Laos — Part I" and "Laos — Part II," published in April, 1962, are still available. They may be ordered separately at our regular reprint prices, or in a set of three with the present *Report* — fifty cents for all three.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Statistics on American casualties in Korea are widely disputed. Even official U.S. Government figures are contradictory. The figure of 53,000 American deaths in Korea was supplied by the late Alfred Kohlberg.
- (2) Statement by Peter Kalischer, CBS Far East Correspondent, *The Dallas Morning News*, January 3, 1961; AP dispatch from Vientiane, Laos, *The Dallas Morning News*, March 24, 1961; AP article from Vientiane, Laos, by Roy Essoyan, *The Dallas Times Herald*, February 15, 1961
- (3) *U.S. Aid Operations in Laos*, Seventh Report by The Committee on Government Operations, U.S. House of Representatives, June 15, 1959
- (4) "Is Laos Lost? Communists Deal From Strength," AP dispatch, *The Dallas Morning News*, May 14, 1961
- (5) Chronology of Kong Le's coup and formation of the new government is from "Statement on Laos," State Department Press Release No. 9, January 7, 1961
- (6) "U.S. Will Support New Laos Regime," *The Dallas Morning News*, December 16, 1960
- (7) "With Red Defeat, U.S. Resumes Aid to Laos," AP dispatch, *The Dallas Times Herald*, December 20, 1960
- (8) AP dispatch from London, *The New York Times*, December 24, 1960, p. 3
- (9) *Washington Report*, by Rear Admiral Chester Ward, American Security Council, March 27, 1961
- (10) AP dispatch from Washington, *The Dallas Times Herald*, March 26, 1961
- (11) AP dispatch from Bangkok, Thailand, *Shreveport Journal*, March 29, 1961
- (12) "Laos Situation Reaches Crisis," by Editorial Research Reports, *The Dallas Morning News*, March 28, 1961
- (13) UPI dispatch from Washington, *The Dallas Morning News*, April 1, 1961
- (14) AP dispatch from Washington, *The Dallas Times Herald*, April 17, 1961
- (15) UPI dispatch from Moscow, *The Dallas Morning News*, April 22, 1961
- (16) UPI dispatch from Washington, *The Dallas Times Herald*, April 29, 1961
- (17) AP dispatch from Geneva, *Shreveport Journal*, May 16, 1961
- (18) AP dispatch from Geneva, *Shreveport Times*, May 28, 1961
- (19) Special to the *Times* from Vientiane, Laos, *The New York Times*, January 3, 1962, pp. 1, 2
- (20) "Pressure on Laos by U.S. Reported," by Jacques Nevard, *The New York Times*, January 5, 1962, pp. 1, 2
- (21) AP dispatch from Vientiane, Laos, *The Dallas Morning News*, January 13, 1962
- (22) AP dispatch from Vientiane, Laos, *The Dallas Morning News*, March 5, 1962
- (23) UPI dispatch from Vientiane, Laos, *The New York Times*, March 26, 1962, p. 8
- (24) "Capital Circus," by Ted Lewis, *New York Daily News*, May 15, 1962; and "For Your Information — Doesn't It Matter?," by Alice Widener, *Shreveport Journal*, May 21, 1962
- (25) AP dispatch from Vientiane, Laos, *The Dallas Morning News*, May 6, 1962, p. 8
- (26) Special to the *Times* from Vientiane, Laos, *The New York Times*, May 7, 1962, pp. 1, 13; and Special to the *Times* by Max Frankel, *The New York Times*, May 7, 1962, p. 13
- (27) *The New York Times*, May 12, 1962, p. 1
- (28) UPI story by Eugene McLaughlin, *The Dallas Times Herald*, May 16, 1962, pp. 1, 8
- (29) Special to the *Times*, *The New York Times*, May 25, 1962, p. 3
- (30) AP dispatch from Khang Khay, Laos, *The Dallas Morning News*, June 12, 1962, p. 1
- (31) "President Urges Soviet To Extend Laos Peace Move," by Max Frankel, *The New York Times*, June 14, 1962, pp. 1, 6
- (32) AP dispatch from Vientiane, Laos, *The New York Times*, June 25, 1962, pp. 1, 3
- (33) "Laos — Milestone in Peace Efforts," *Foreign Policy Briefs*, State Department, August 6, 1962
- (34) "Laos," *Foreign Policy Briefs*, State Department, October 1, 1962
- (35) Remarks of U. S. Representative Melvin R. Laird (Republican, Wisconsin), *Congressional Record*, August 13, 1962, p. 15245
- (36) *U.S. News & World Report*, October 1, 1962, p. 67
- (37) UPI dispatch from Washington, *Shreveport Times*, March 17, 1963
- (38) *U.S. News & World Report*, February 4, 1963, p. 16
- (39) UPI dispatch from Washington, *The Dallas Morning News*, April 23, 1963, p. 1

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WHO IS DAN SMOOT?

Dan Smoot was born in Missouri. Reared in Texas, he attended SMU in Dallas, taking BA and MA degrees from that university in 1938 and 1940.

In 1941, he joined the faculty at Harvard as a Teaching Fellow in English, doing graduate work for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the field of American Civilization.

In 1942, he took leave of absence from Harvard in order to join the FBI. At the close of the war, he stayed in the FBI, rather than return to Harvard.

He worked as an FBI Agent in all parts of the nation, handling all kinds of assignments. But for three and a half years, he worked exclusively on communist investigations in the industrial midwest. For two years following that, he was on FBI headquarters staff in Washington, as an Administrative Assistant to J. Edgar Hoover.

After nine and a half years in the FBI, Smoot resigned to help start the Facts Forum movement in Dallas. As the radio and television commentator for Facts Forum, Smoot, for almost four years spoke to a national audience giving both sides of great controversial issues.

In July, 1955, he resigned and started his own independent program, in order to give only one side — the side that uses fundamental American principles as a yardstick for measuring all important issues.

If you believe that Dan Smoot is providing effective tools for those who want to think and talk and write on the side of freedom, you can help immensely by subscribing, and encouraging others to subscribe, to *The Dan Smoot Report*.